

# Textual and Rhetorical-critical Observations on the Last Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13–53:12)

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FEW SUBJECTS IN CHAPTERS 40–56 of the Book of Isaiah have commanded as much attention as the so-called Servant songs. In this paper I shall limit my attention to the last of these, Isa 52:13–53:12. Because of the complexity of this topic and the restrictions of space, it will be possible to focus on only a few aspects of this important composition. I shall examine the structure of this Servant song and a number of rhetorical features. At the same time, I shall propose several new readings and solutions to several problematic passages. Finally, I shall discuss the nature of the Servant's suffering as depicted in this poem and the question of his death.

## I. The Structure of the Poem

Any rhetorical-critical study of a literary unit must attempt to discern its structure. In the case of Isa 52:13–53:12 scholarly consensus is generally in agreement at least as to some structural parameters.<sup>1</sup> In the most basic terms one may speak of a clearly defined prologue (52:13-15) and epilogue (53:11c-12). The intervening material may be assigned the neutral designation “the body.”

This article is the presidential address delivered at the Sixty-second International Meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, held at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, August 7–10, 1999.

<sup>1</sup> For the division of the poem into poetic units (cola) and for verse divisions referred to in this paper, see the appendix.

The prologue is marked off from the body by the switch to interrogative mode in 53:1, which often indicates the beginning of a new section of poetry, and by the switch from 1st sg. to 1st pl. forms in this verse. Beyond this there is a series of correspondences between the prologue and the epilogue that show these functioning as two matching sections framing the body.<sup>2</sup> The most important of these correspondences for our purposes are the following: (1) the word *‘abdi*, “my servant,” appears in the prologue and epilogue (52:13a, 53:11c)—and only there—followed by a hiphil verb (*yaškil* and *yašdiq*);<sup>3</sup> (2) the term *rabbim* appears in only two sections of the poem, the prologue (52:14a, 15a) and the epilogue (53:11c, 12a, 12e).

The material that remains—53:1-11b—is the body, which is marked off by several inclusions: *zērôa*<sup>c</sup> in 53:1 and *zera*<sup>c</sup> in 53:10d (phonic inclusion) and derivatives of the root *r’y* in 53:2cd (*wénir<sup>2</sup>ēhû* and *mar<sup>2</sup>eh*) and in 53:10d and 11b (*yir<sup>2</sup>eh*). The 1st pl. forms begin in 53:1a and continue only as far as *kullānû* in 53:6d. This suggests a major division after 53:6. The divine name *yhwh* appears at the beginning of the body (53:1a) and not again until 53:6c, creating an inclusion that further designates 53:1-6 as a unit. These data suggest a division of the body into two major parts, 53:1-6 and 53:7-11b,<sup>4</sup> which I designate as part A and part B, respectively.

Each of these two major parts of the body may be further subdivided into four smaller units. Inclusions in part A establish the boundaries of these subunits in this part of the poem. The last subunit is 53:6, which begins and ends with *kullānû*. The second is 53:3, where *nibzēhû* (or *nibzeh* in the MT) begins the first and last cola.<sup>5</sup> This yields four subdivisions in part A, which I shall designate as “stanzas”: 53:1-2, 3, 4-5, and 6. The second and fourth stanzas are four cola in length, whereas the other two are longer: 53:1-2 = 6 cola, 53:3 = 4 cola, 53:4-5 = 8 cola, and 53:6 = 4 cola.

In part B one may identify the last subunit or stanza as 53:10c-11b, (beginning with *‘im*).<sup>6</sup> The first colon ends with *naṣṣô*, followed immediately by a colon beginning with *yir<sup>2</sup>eh*. This sequence is repeated in 53:11ab, indicating the end of the subunit. As for the rest of part B, it is not difficult to

<sup>2</sup> The correspondences have been pointed out by other authors. See, for example, A. R. Ceresko, “The Rhetorical Strategy of the Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13–53:12): Poetry and the Exodus–New Exodus Event,” *CBQ* 56 (1994) 51 and n. 32.

<sup>3</sup> 1st sg. forms appear only in the prologue and the epilogue (note *‘āhallelq* in 53:12a) with one possible exception: the MT’s *‘ammî* in 53:8d, for which 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> reads *‘mw* (*‘ammô*).

<sup>4</sup> That is, concluding with *yisbā<sup>c</sup>* or *bēda<sup>c</sup>‘ô*. I shall deal with this question later in this paper.

<sup>5</sup> For the reading *nibzēhû*, see below, n. 61.

<sup>6</sup> 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has an indentation just before this word, indicating that the scribe considered this the beginning of a new subsection.

see that v. 7 constitutes a stanza in its own right: the bicolon v. 7ab ends with *wēlōʾ yiptah pîw* (“and he did not open his mouth”), as does the subsequent tricolon v. 7c-e. There is some evidence that vv. 8-10b make up two stanzas, v. 8 and vv. 9-10b, respectively. In v. 8, the first and last cola begin with the preposition *min*, which appears in every colon save one (v. 8b). Furthermore, there is a sonant inclusion at the beginning and end of the verse. The first and last cola contain three occurrences of the sound /m/ (doubled once in each colon) plus the phonemes /p, š, ʿ, l/. This leaves vv. 9-10b, which, therefore, must be a subunit.<sup>7</sup> Thus, part B contains four stanzas: 53:7, 8, 9-10b, and 10c-11b. As in part A, the second stanza (v. 8) contains four cola, and the first (v. 7) and third (vv. 9-10b) more than four, whereas the fourth contains five cola. Below I shall argue that one of these five cola is secondary.

## II. The Phenomenon of the Reversed Word Pairs

One of the most striking rhetorical features of this Servant song is the presence of certain word pairs that appear more than once in the poem. Almost all appear only twice, and the order of the terms is reversed in the second occurrence. Bergey identifies five pairs.<sup>8</sup> I believe that in the poem *seven* word-pairs of this type are to be found, which I shall discuss in the order of their appearance. These terms occur both in the prologue-epilogue and in the body. The first appearance of each takes place in the first half of the poem (stanzas one to five). In their first appearance the members of the pair are in parallel or paratactic relationship, but not necessarily in their second occurrence. The identification of these seven pairs bears significantly on certain textual issues in the poem.

First, *marʾeh* || *tōʾār*, “looks” || “appearance” (52:14bc).<sup>9</sup> This pair is repeated in reverse sequence in stanza two, again in reference to the Servant (53:2cd).

Second, *ʾiš* || *bēnē ʾādām*, “man” || “human beings” (52:14bc).<sup>10</sup> Note that one member of the pair is singular and the other plural. The term *ʾiš* reappears in stanza three (in 53:3ab), but here the MT reads *ʾišīm*, juxtaposed to *ʾiš*.

<sup>7</sup> IQIsa<sup>a</sup> has a sizable indentation before *wytw* (for the MT’s *wayyittēn*), marking the beginning of another subsection.

<sup>8</sup> R. Bergey, “The Rhetorical Role of Reiteration in the Suffering Servant Poem (Isa 52:13-53:12),” *JETS* 40 (1997) 180.

<sup>9</sup> First identified by C. R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948) 124; see also Bergey, “Rhetorical Role of Reiteration,” 180.

<sup>10</sup> On this word pair, see Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures* (AOAT 210; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984) 641 and n. 2. The pair is a variation of the pair *ʾiš* || *ʾādām* and appears also in Jer 32:19; 49:18, 33; 50:40; 51:43.

Certain Greek textual witnesses, however, have τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων for the MT's ʾišīm. It is difficult to see why a Greek translator would have rendered ʾišīm by this typically Semitic periphrasis. The more likely explanation is that the Hebrew *Vorlage* had *bēnē ʾādām*. If so, the word pair recurs, reversed, in 53:3ab.

Third, *makʾōbōt* || *hōlī*, “pains” || “sickness” (53:3ab).<sup>11</sup> This pair reappears in reversed order in stanza four (in 53:4ab),<sup>12</sup> but in its second occurrence the number of the second member of the pair in the consonantal MT is ambivalent: *hlynw*. Whereas it is singular (*hōlī*) in its first occurrence, in its second it is vocalized in the MT as *hōloyēnū*, a defectively written plural.<sup>13</sup> However, it could be vocalized as the singular, *holyēnū*. In the two word pairs noted thus far one member was singular and the other plural. Here as elsewhere in this poem the MT displays a tendency to make both members of the word pairs plural. We shall see the relevance of this observation presently.

Fourth, *nāsāʾ* || *sābal*, “carry” || “bear” (53:4ab).<sup>14</sup> The final, reversed occurrence of the pair creates an inclusion in the epilogue (stanza ten): *yisbōl* (53:11d) . . . *nāsāʾ* (53:12e).<sup>15</sup> The Servant is the subject of both verbs.

Fifth, *nāgūaʿ* || *mēʿunneh*, “stricken” || “afflicted” (53:4cd). Like *nāsāʾ* || *sābal*, this pair recurs in the second half of the poem, again in distant parallelism, in 53:7a and 8d: *naʿāneh* . . . *negaʿ*. In the MT the second term is not the expected verbal form but a noun. But the reading of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> is surely to be preferred: *nwgʿ* (*nuggaʿ*), a 3d masc. sg. pual. Thus, as in 53:4cd the two terms are passive verb forms.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> First identified by North, *Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah*, 176; see also Bergey, “Rhetorical Role of Reiteration,” 180.

<sup>12</sup> In its second appearance there is a difference. The plural termination on *makʾōb* is the masculine form (plus the 1st pl. suffix *-ēnū*) rather than the feminine *-ōtēnū*. The termination *-ōt* occurs only here in the MT. It is noteworthy that 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>, which tends to agree with the MT, has the masculine termination in both cases.

<sup>13</sup> 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> also has a plural, which is clear from the fact that it adds a supralinear yod after the yod in *hlynw*. In the case of nouns ending in yod the masc. pl. ending *-īm* is standardly written defectively (see GKC §8k); note *hōloyīm* in Deut 28:59.

<sup>14</sup> See Ceresko, “Rhetorical Strategy of the Fourth Servant Song,” 52; Bergey, “Rhetorical Role of Reiteration,” 180.

<sup>15</sup> In point of fact this pair occurs three times in the poem. One occurrence may be seen in the second colon of the prologue (52:13b) and in the second colon of the epilogue (53:11d), where the two stand in “distant parallelism”: *wēniššāʾ* and *yisbōl*, the same order as in 53:4ab.

<sup>16</sup> Again, there are some differences vis-à-vis the first occurrence of the pair. *nāgūaʿ* is the qal passive participle of the root *ngʿ*, and *mēʿunneh* is the pual participle of the root ʿny II (see HALAT, 807), whereas in the second occurrence the forms are finite: *naʿāneh* is the 3d masc. sg. niphāl and *nuggaʿ* the 3d masc. sg. pual.

Sixth, *mēhōlāl* || *mēdukkeh*, “wounded” || “crushed” (53:5ab).<sup>17</sup> The ancient Hebrew manuscripts that contain this line read a root with final aleph instead of final he.<sup>18</sup> It seems that only one member of the pair reappears in the second half of the poem, namely, *dakkēʾō*, “to ‘crush’ him,” for in the MT this is followed by *heḥēlī*, from the root *ḥly* rather than *ḥll*.<sup>19</sup> For the second verb 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> reads a derivative of *ḥll* (*wyḥllhw*).<sup>20</sup> I suggest reading *hōlēlō*, the polel infinitive with the 3d masc. sg. suffix, “to ‘pierce’ him,” coordinate with the infinitive *dakkēʾō*. The textual witness of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> combined with the rhetorical pattern of the reversed word pairs leaves little doubt that some form of *ḥll* is the correct reading in this verse.

Seventh, (*mip*)*pēšāʿenū* || (*mē*)*ʿāwōnōtēnū*, “our transgressions” || “our iniquities” (53:5ab).<sup>21</sup> This last word pair is somewhat more complicated. The first term should be vocalized as the sg. form, *pišʿenū*.<sup>22</sup> The pair turns up again in the epilogue, where the members appear in distant parallelism, forming an inclusion around this stanza (53:11d and 12f). However, instead of the expected abstract noun (“transgression”) the MT has (*wēlap*)*pōšēʿim* (“transgressors”). The form *pōšēʿim* also occurs at the end of the previous bicolon (53:12d); this raises the suspicion that the latter may have influenced the form of the noun in 53:12f.

For the second *pōšēʿim* (in 53:12f) the LXX as well as all ancient Hebrew witnesses (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>, and 4QIsa<sup>d</sup>) read the abstract noun with the 3d masc. pl. suffix, (*wl*)*pšʿyhm(h)*, “their transgressions.” But these same textual witnesses also read a plural for the parallel term in the preceding colon: *ḥīʿy* (*ḥāṭāʿē*), “sins,” for the MT’s *ḥēṭʿ*. The MT points the way to the solution: its (*wl*)*pšʿyhm* arose from an earlier (*wl*)*pšʿm*, whose final *-m* the scribal tradition understood as the 3d masc. pl. ending. The word in question was

<sup>17</sup> See Ceresko, “Rhetorical Strategy of the Fourth Servant Song,” 46; Bergey, “Rhetorical Role of Reiteration,” 180.

<sup>18</sup> 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> The reading of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> is to be parsed as an archaic or archaizing 3d masc. sg. hiphil form (see GKC §75ii).

<sup>20</sup> This is best interpreted as the 3d masc. sg. with 3d masc. sg. suffix from the root *ḥll*, probably a polel. However, if this is what 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> read here, one would have expected the fuller orthography, with waw following the heth.

<sup>21</sup> See Bergey, “Rhetorical Role of Reiteration,” 180.

<sup>22</sup> The orthography of the first term (the lack of a yod after the ayin) indicates the singular form *pišʿenū* rather than the MT’s *pēšāʿenū*. Here we have another example of the MT’s tendency to make the components of various word pairs plurals.

originally (*ûlē*)*piš'ām*, “their transgression.”<sup>23</sup> Such a form makes a perfect complement to the other member of the pair in 53:11d, *ʿāwōnōtām*.

One can intercede for transgressors but hardly for transgressions.<sup>24</sup> This observation, supported by Hebrew syntax,<sup>25</sup> necessitates a closer look at the verb *yapgiā*<sup>c</sup> that follows *ʿāwōnōtām*. This verb corresponds to *hipgiā*<sup>c</sup> at the end of stanza five. But is the former a hiphil? Several ancient witnesses suggest otherwise.<sup>26</sup> Most important, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has *ypg*<sup>c</sup>, without the yod after the gimel.<sup>27</sup> The word could, therefore, be a hophal. Such a reading is supported by the LXX, which reads a passive verb: *παρεδόθη*, “he was handed over.”<sup>28</sup> In this passage I interpret the *lē-* governing *piš'ām* as the direct object marker, forming an inclusion with a word governed by the same morpheme in the first colon of this stanza, *lērabbīm* (MT: *lārabbīm*).<sup>29</sup> The object marker usually found in this “retained accusative” construction is *ʿēt*,<sup>30</sup> but *lē-* is also possible.<sup>31</sup> The colon could thus be translated, “And their transgression was made to fall [or “light”] upon (him).”<sup>32</sup> The colon, therefore, has nothing to do with

<sup>23</sup> This reading is suggested in the critical apparatus of the second edition of *BHS*. The tradition underlying the MT read an original *wlpš'īm ypg*<sup>c</sup> as *wēlappōš'īm yapgiā*<sup>c</sup>. The reading *wlpš'yhm(h)* in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>, and 4QIsa<sup>a</sup> (cf. also the LXX) is not a scribal error; it represents a deliberate pluralization of the original (*ûlē*)*piš'ām* in 53:12f to (*ûlē*)*piš'ēhem* (and of *hēt*<sup>c</sup> in v. 12e to *hātā'ē*). In other words, these ancient witnesses attest *indirectly* to the reading (*ûlē*)*piš'ām*. K. Elliger (“Nochmals Textkritisches zu Jes 53,” in *Wort, Lied und Gottesspruch: Beiträge zu Psalmen und Propheten* [ed. J. Schreiner; FB 2; Würzburg: Echter Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1972] 143) accepts *ûlēpiš'ēhem* as original whereas R. J. Clifford (*Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah* [New York: Paulist Press, 1984] 175 n. 8) reads *ûlēpiš'ām*.

<sup>24</sup> See also G. R. Driver, “Isaiah 52 12–53 13: The Servant of the Lord,” in *In Memoriam Paul Kahle* (ed. M. Black and G. Fohrer; BZAW 103; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1968) 103.

<sup>25</sup> Where *pg*<sup>c</sup> means “to intercede, intervene” the *lē-* does not govern the thing about which one intercedes but rather the person on whose behalf this is done (Gen 23:8).

<sup>26</sup> Elliger (“Nochmals Textkritisches zu Jes 53,” 143–44) also rejects the MT’s hiphil here and reads *ypg*<sup>c</sup> (as in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), parsing it as a niphil form: “und für ihre Frevel getroffen ward.”

<sup>27</sup> This would be quite unexpected if the scribe of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> meant to write the hiphil, since this manuscript consistently shows a pronounced tendency to fuller orthography.

<sup>28</sup> The LXX reads the same verbal root here as in 53:6d, where it renders *hipgiā*<sup>c</sup> also by a form of *παρᾰδίδομι*, namely, *παρᾰδόκεν*.

<sup>29</sup> The article should be omitted here. The word *rabbīm* is clearly anarthrous in 52:14a and 53:12e, where it denotes the same group referred to in 53:11c.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, GKC §121ab; B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 384 (§23.2.2e). They note the use of *ʿēt* with the hophal in Exod 10:8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 210 (§11.2.10g).

<sup>32</sup> Such a reading has the advantage of construing the verb *pg*<sup>c</sup> with the same meaning as in 53:6d, the end of the fifth stanza and first half of the poem.

intercession.<sup>33</sup> It is simply a restatement of 53:6de (“Yet Yahweh caused the iniquity of us all to fall upon him”) in the passive voice, with *peša<sup>c</sup>* instead of its complement *‘āwôn*.<sup>34</sup>

### III. The Wise Servant, Who Instructs and Leads to Righteousness

More than forty-five years ago H. L. Ginsberg recognized a connection between the first cola of the prologue and epilogue (52:13a and 53:11c) on the one hand and Dan 12:3ab on the other.<sup>35</sup> The text in Daniel is

*wəhammaskīlīm yazhīrū*  
*kəzōhar hārāqīa<sup>c</sup>*  
*ūmašdīqē hārabbīm*  
*kakkōkābīm lē‘ōlām wā<sup>c</sup>ed*

And those who are wise shall shine  
 like the brightness of the firmament,  
 And those who turn many to righteousness,  
 like the stars forever and ever (*RSV*).

Ginsberg termed Dan 12:3ab “the oldest interpretation of the Suffering Servant.” The fact that the author of Daniel joined these two lines as a couplet indicates that he perceived a relationship between them. The word *hammaskīlīm* is simply *yaškīl* (Isa 52:13a) in participial form, as *mašdīqē* is the participial form of *yašdīq* (Isa 53:11c).

Virtually all modern English translators of Dan 12:3 translate the former “those who are wise,” or the like. That this is how the author meant the term to be understood in Dan 12:3 is corroborated by the use of this participle in Dan 11:33 and Dan 12:10, where it is the subject of *byn*, “to understand.” Given this ancient interpretation of Isa 52:13a and 53:11c in Daniel 12, it is curious that few modern translations reflect a connection of *yaškīl* with wisdom.<sup>36</sup> Further evidence that this verb does carry a sapiential nuance in

<sup>33</sup> On the Servant’s alleged “intercession” in this verse, see the remarks of O. H. Steck (“Aspekte des Gottesknechtes in Jes 52,13–53,12,” *ZAW* 97 [1985] 45 n. 38), who notes that this would contradict the consistent picture of the Servant as silent and passive in this poem.

<sup>34</sup> Since the first bicolon of the epilogue connects it closely with the beginning of the prologue, and the last colon of the epilogue connects it with the end of stanza five, the beginning and end of the epilogue recapitulate the beginning and end of the first half of the poem.

<sup>35</sup> H. L. Ginsberg, “The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant,” *VT* 3 (1953) 400–404; see also J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 393.

<sup>36</sup> The *NIV* has “My servant will act wisely” (with the traditional alternative, “will prosper,” given in a footnote); so also Bergey, “Rhetorical Role of Reiteration,” 182 and n. 18 (see also 186 n. 22).

this passage is provided by the prologue-epilogue. The prologue concludes with *hitbônānū*, “they understood” (52:15d), another standard term in the vocabulary of wisdom, the same verb associated with *škl* in Dan 11:33; 12:10. These two terms thus frame the prologue with a sapiential inclusion. This pattern is continued in the epilogue. I follow the position that *bēdaʿtô* in 53:11c begins the concluding stanza and may be translated “by his knowledge” or “by his wisdom.” The three terms *yaškil*, *hitbônānū*, and *bēdaʿtô* thus create a wisdom “envelope” around the poem.<sup>37</sup> The interrelation of these three terms was perceived by the LXX translator, who rendered each of them with a form of the verb συνίημι, “to understand.”

The association of the Servant with wisdom continues in the body of the poem. In 53:5c the author mentions the *mūsar*, the “discipline” of the Servant, a term well established in wisdom contexts. The reference to his silence, his refusal to respond with hostility to provocation in 53:7, is characteristic of the wise person in the ancient Near East.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the characterization of the Servant in 53:9cd as one without violence or deceit also fits the behavior of the wise or virtuous.

The patently transitive sense of *škl* (hiphil) in Dan 9:22 raises the possibility that the term is transitive in 12:3 as well, meaning not “those who are wise” but “those who impart wisdom, instruct.” Might this suggest that *yaškil* in Isa 52:13 is also transitive? A major objection to understanding the verb in this way is that it lacks an object. However, I postulate that it has as its object the three words that follow *ʿabdi*. These are to be read as two participles and an adjective.<sup>39</sup> This reading presumes that the MT’s *yrwm* arose from an earlier *yr̄m*, and that this in turn resulted from a dittography of the *yod* in *ʿabdi*. Originally *ʿabdi* was followed by *rām wēniššāʿ wēgābōah mēʿōd*, lit., “that which is high, exalted, and exceedingly lofty.”<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Bergey (ibid., 177-88) was the first to draw attention to the sapiential character of these three terms. The author made this observation independently in 1998.

<sup>38</sup> On the virtue of not reacting with hostility to provocation, see Prov 15:17; 24:29. In Egyptian wisdom literature this is a trait of the “cool man”; see M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature 1: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) 63-64, 70, 72, 142, 177-78; eadem, *Ancient Egyptian Literature 2: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 140-41, 143, 150, 153, 159.

<sup>39</sup> As far as I am aware, parsing *yārōm wēniššāʿ wēgābah* as something other than finite verbs was first proposed by M. Dahood, “Phoenician Elements in Isaiah 52:13-53:12,” in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (ed. H. Goedicke; Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971) 65. Dahood took these as divine epithets: “the Exalted and Sublime and Most Lofty.” He parsed *yrwm* as *yārūm*, “exalted,” a form presumably attested in Pss 18:47 (cf. 2 Sam 22:47, *yārūm*); 61:3. However, his reading means that the suffix on *ʿabdi* would have to be parsed as a 3d masc. sg. form, one of his many attempts to read this morpheme as a Phoenician suffix, which has failed to carry conviction.

<sup>40</sup> The word pair *rām* || *niššāʿ*, first noted by J. S. Kselman (“A Note on Isaiah II 2,” *VT* 25 [1975] 225-27), is here broken up and spread over two cola, probably because *rām wēniššāʿ*

The main evidence for this reading of the three words comes from a poem in First Isaiah—Isa 2:12-17.<sup>41</sup> The witness of the LXX and rhetorical-critical evidence indicate that the opening verse (2:12) originally read

*kī yôm lēyhwh šēbāʾôt*  
*ʿal kol-gēʾeh wārām*  
*wēʿal kol-niśšāʾ <wēgābōah> (MT: wēšāpēl)<sup>42</sup>*

For Yahweh of Hosts has a day  
 against all that is haughty and high,  
 against all that is exalted and lofty.

The participles and adjectives are ambiguous. Do they refer to things or persons? As the poem develops, it becomes clear that they refer to prideful human beings. These terms are followed by images of loftiness in the plural—lofty cedars and high mountains, found elsewhere in the OT as metaphors for human beings filled with pride.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the threefold “high, exalted, and lofty” of Isa 52:13 is followed by three plural nouns referring to exalted human beings: the *rabbîm*,<sup>44</sup> the “vast nations,” and “kings” (vv. 14-15b).

The reaction of the *rabbîm*, the “great ones,” to the Servant is described by the verb *šāmēmû* in 52:14a. A number of modern translations have “appalled” or “astonished,” but in some passages the root is closely associated with grieving or mourning. N. Lohfink has suggested that in such contexts

would overload the first colon. But since *wēniśšāʾ* is too short to constitute a colon in its own right, a third formulaically related term was added, *gābōah* (+ *mēʾōd*). The roots *nsʾ* and *gbh* occur together as a formulaic pair in Isa 2:12 (emended [cf. LXX]); 30:25; 57:7; *gbh* and *rwm* occur together (in most cases as a formulaic pair) in Job 22:12; 39:27; Pss 131:1; 138:6; Isa 10:33; 40:9; Jer 48:29; Ezek 21:31; 31:10.

<sup>41</sup> See my forthcoming article, “A Rhetorical-critical Look at Isa 2:12-17.”

<sup>42</sup> The LXX has καὶ ἐπὶ πάντα ὑψηλὸν καὶ μετέωρον, καὶ ταπεινωθήσονται. The last word seems to presume a Hebrew *Vorlage* with *wšplw* rather than the MT’s *wšpl*. E. Hatch and H. A. Redpath (*A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament* [2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1897] 2. 917) erroneously list μετέωρον as translating *niśšāʾ* here rather than *gābōah*.

<sup>43</sup> Assyria is likened to a lofty cedar of Lebanon in Ezek 31:3; Babylon is called a “destroying mountain” in Jer 51:25.

<sup>44</sup> The meaning of *rabbîm* in this poem is debated. J. W. Olley (“How Is Isa 53,12a to Be Understood?” *Bib* 68 [1987] 330-56) published a thorough study of the biblical evidence on this point, coming down on the side of the quantitative interpretation, at least for 53:12. However, he does not discuss later versus earlier uses of the term. Although *rab* is quantitative in the majority of its occurrences, there are a number of passages from the exilic and postexilic period in which the roots *rbb* and its byform *rby* have a qualitative sense: Job 33:12; 35:9b; Jer 41:1; Lam 1:1; Dan 11:3, 5. I understand *rabbîm* to have this meaning in this Servant song, where it refers to some unidentified elite group within Israel. I shall provisionally translate the “great ones.”

it refers to a period of numbness and silence that was part of the mourning ritual, like Italian *attassamento*.<sup>45</sup> Thus, I translate “desolated.”

In order to understand the reactions of the two remaining groups (the “vast nations,” and their kings) to the Servant—we must look first at 52:15b, “But kings shall shut their mouths.” The general consensus is that this gesture signals some kind of shock or astonishment,<sup>46</sup> but M. Gruber has shown that in ancient Near Eastern literature “to open the mouth” and similar expressions mean to smile, laugh.<sup>47</sup> Conversely, “to shut the mouth” means to refuse to smile, to sulk.<sup>48</sup> This meaning is abundantly evident in Ps 107:42, “The upright shall see (this)<sup>49</sup> and rejoice (*wēyīšmāhū*), but all the wicked shall shut their mouth (*qāpēšā pihā*).”<sup>50</sup> This contrast between the just rejoicing and the wicked closing their mouth appears in Ps 63:12: “And the king shall rejoice (*yīšmah*) in God . . . , but the mouth of those who speak lies shall be shut (*yissākēr*).”

These two psalm texts are the key to the sense of the problematic verb *yizzeḥ* in Isa 52:15a, as both texts have “rejoice” (*šmḥ*) as the parallel to the idiom “to shut (one’s) mouth.” The MT’s *yizzeḥ* can only mean “he will sprinkle,” which makes no sense in the context.<sup>51</sup> I propose that the verb is to be parsed as a plural form with the final /ū/ unexpressed in the orthography (the LXX reads a plural verb). It is a derivative of the root *zhy*, attested in postbiblical Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. The root sense is “to shine,”<sup>52</sup>

<sup>45</sup> N. Lohfink, “Enthielten die im Alten Testament bezeugten Klageriten eine Phase des Schweigens?” *VT* 12 (1962) 267.

<sup>46</sup> For an overview of previous interpretations, see R. E. Watts, “The Meaning of *ālāw yiqpešū melākīm* in Isaiah LII 15,” *VT* 40 (1990) 327-29. Watts misses the basic import of the idiom, insofar as he thinks shutting the mouth reflects the fact that the parties in question fall under God’s judgment (p. 330).

<sup>47</sup> M. I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Studia Pohl 12; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980) 571 n. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 571 n. 1 and 410-11 n. 2, where he mentions the related Akkadian idioms *šaptī petū*, “to open the lips,” and *šaptī katāmu*, “to close the lips.” The former can be translated “to smile, rejoice,” and the latter “to refrain from smiling, to sulk.”

<sup>49</sup> That is, the saving acts of Yahweh, a major theme in the psalm.

<sup>50</sup> Literally, “All iniquity shall shut its mouth.”

<sup>51</sup> The standard solution to this crux, to appeal to an alleged Arabic cognate *nzw* meaning “to leap,” whence purportedly “to be startled” (cf. the LXX’s θαυμάσονται), is a solution born of desperation.

<sup>52</sup> This may be seen in the Arabic and Aramaic cognates. For the Arabic, see H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (3d ed.; Ithaca, NY: Spoken Languages Services, 1979) 384; for the Aramaic, see M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Dictionaries of Talmud, Midrash, and Targum 2; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990) 172.

with the developed sense “to smile, to be happy,”<sup>53</sup> hence “to rejoice.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, I vocalize the verb as *yizhū* and translate, “they will rejoice (over him).”

To summarize thus far as regards the opening stanza, the Servant is portrayed as a wisdom figure who “instructs” certain groups—“the high, the exalted, and the lofty”—which are specified a few verses later as the *rabbīm*, the “vast nations,” and (their) “kings.” At least according to 52:14 the “great ones” are unable to get beyond their shock and grief over the Servant so as to understand his instruction. In contrast, nothing is said about the reaction of the “vast nations” to his appearance. But somehow they do “understand” his unspoken teaching and rejoice over him. They are most likely the subject of 52:15cd, “For what they had never been told they perceived, what they had never heard they understood.”<sup>55</sup> Finally, the leaders of these nations, the members of the third group, have yet another reaction to the Servant. They adopt a posture of sulking and refuse to join their subjects in rejoicing over the Servant. None of the groups reacts here with the “surprise” or “astonishment” reflected in most translations, nor does any of them react to the purported “exaltation” of the Servant. They react rather to what God teaches through him: his vicarious suffering for Israel.

#### IV. The God-Smitten Servant

In the immediately preceding section I have concentrated largely on interpretational issues in the opening stanza of the poem. In what follows I shall focus on the body, with particular attention to the issue of the Servant’s suffering. What does the text tell us about his suffering? Is it mainly of divine or of human origin? I shall also deal with a controversial issue related to this topic, namely, whether this poem makes reference to the Servant’s death.

##### A. Stanzas Two through Five

The issues of the Servant’s sufferings and his alleged death have received much attention. In my opinion, the picture which the text presents in this regard has suffered distortion from tendentious renderings reflecting the conviction that the Servant is portrayed as undergoing a veritable passion at the hands of others. Such renderings result, I would argue, from “overreading”

<sup>53</sup> As in Aramaic; see Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 172.

<sup>54</sup> See Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 557-98.

<sup>55</sup> This phraseology again expresses the fact that in this particular poem the Servant does not speak at all; his “teaching” apparently consists simply in his bearing the sufferings that Yahweh imposes on him.

the text in some cases and misreading it in others. In some instances this can be attributed to a tendency to conform this poem to what is said about the Servant's sufferings in the other Servant songs, especially the third (Isa 50:4-11), or even to the sufferings of Jesus as they are narrated in the passion narratives of the gospels. Occasionally the patently metaphorical nature of certain passages in the song is disregarded, seemingly in the interests of heightening the Servant's afflictions. Some interpreters seize upon one or more terms which become the basis of far-fetched "historicizations" of the Servant's sufferings. In the light of the poem's structure and the text established above, I shall now argue that these interpretational *Tendenzen* are not supported—or at least are not demanded—by the text in its pre-Masoretic form.

The body of the poem begins with a series of questions which express the speakers' amazement at something incredible they have heard. I agree with those who identify the speakers—the "we" of part A—with the "great ones" mentioned in the opening stanza. Their initial reaction to the Servant has seemingly rendered them incapable of understanding what Yahweh was trying to "teach" through him. But as the body of the poem begins we see them somehow able to understand the Servant's teaching. After this, the speakers describe their earlier perception of the Servant.

In 53:2 the Servant is portrayed as "growing up" (*wayya'al*)<sup>56</sup> in the presence of the speakers.<sup>57</sup> The simile that follows is sometimes misunderstood because of a failure to translate (<sup>2</sup>*ereš*) *šiyā* correctly. This expression occurs eight times in formulaic relation with synonymous *midbār*, "steppe, wasteland."<sup>58</sup> The Servant is likened not to a plant growing out of "dry soil" but to one sprouting out of the arid "wasteland."<sup>59</sup> Such an image is that of a desert weed so unattractive that it does not merit a second look, which is exactly what the next verse says: "He had no appearance to make us notice (literally, "see") him || no looks that would make us find him attractive."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> In biblical Hebrew the root *ʿly* is used to denote the growth of plants (cf. BDB, 748), but never elsewhere with reference to human beings.

<sup>57</sup> I read here *lēpānēnū*, "before us," with 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> (*lpnw*). Possibly the MT's *lpnyw* comes from an earlier *lpnw* (*lēpānāw* [GKC §91k]), which could result from haplography of the nun in *lpnw*. Everything in stanzas two through five (part A) is narrated from the perspective of the speakers and concerns their reaction to the Servant. For this reason "in our presence" fits the context better than "in his presence."

<sup>58</sup> Ps 107:35; Isa 35:1; 41:18; Jer 2:6; 50:12; Ezek 19:13; Hos 2:3; Zeph 2:13. See Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs*, 244.

<sup>59</sup> J. L. McKenzie caught the nuance in his commentary (*Second Isaiah* [AB 20; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968] 131), describing the plant in question as "the scrub growth of the desert."

<sup>60</sup> The fact that the "great ones" do not see or look at the Servant contrasts with the "vast nations" who see or perceive (*rā'ū*) his teaching in 52:15c.

In the following stanza (53:3) the repeated word *nibzēhū* (*nibzeh* in the MT), especially in v. 3d, describes someone not well regarded, which is basically what v. 2cd also says.<sup>61</sup> “Despised” is probably too strong a translation, as in modern English it can connote emotional intensity, and possibly hostility. As for *ḥādal*, the root sense is “to leave (someone) alone, withdraw, back off from.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, *ḥādal bēnē ʿādām* means “withdrawn from humanity.”<sup>63</sup> There is little to commend the passive interpretation, especially in the traditional translation “rejected.”<sup>64</sup> More likely, the Servant is depicted as a person tending to withdraw from others, perhaps in a way similar to lepers who kept their distance from others in the community.<sup>65</sup> Thus, nothing in this stanza supports the view that those who disesteemed the Servant treated him with hostility, let alone violence.

In stanza four the “great ones” realize that the Servant’s sufferings were the punishment which *their* sins deserved. These sufferings are described by three passive participles referring to the Servant: *nāgūa*<sup>c</sup>, *mukkēh*, and *mē<sup>c</sup>unneh* (53:4cd). The first is from the root *ng<sup>c</sup>*, “touch > “touch banefully, strike (with disease).” Although it can denote affliction by a variety of agents, it is associated with a divinely inflicted punishment in a number of passages.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> I read *nibzēhū* in vv. 3a and 3d rather than *nibzeh* (MT). This reading derives some support from 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, which in v. 3d reads *wnbwzwh* (*ūnēbūzēhū*), from *bwz*, a byform of *bzy*. The MT’s *nbzh wlp* in v. 3d could have resulted from a haplography of *nbzwh wlp*; *nbzh whdl* in v. 3a should be redivided as *nbzwh ḥdl*, “We disesteemed him (as) one withdrawn (from people).” Everything that is said about the Servant in part A (the “we” section) is spoken from the vantage point of the speakers.

<sup>62</sup> See D. N. Freedman and J. Lundbom, “חָדַל/*chādal*,” *TDOT*, 4, 216-17. The Arabic cognate can signify “not to keep up with (a group), lag behind” (E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* [London: Williams & Norgate, 1863] 712).

<sup>63</sup> In biblical Hebrew a construct phrase consisting of a *nomen regens* and a *nomen rectum* can function as the equivalent of two nouns in the absolute with an intervening preposition. Compare in the same context *kēmispēd ʿal-hayyāḥīd*, “like the mourning for an only child” (Zech 12:10), with *kēmispad ḥādad-rimmôn*, “like the mourning for Hadad-Rimmon” (Zech 12:12). Thus, *ḥādal bēnē ʿādām* could be equivalent to *ḥādēl mibbēnē ʿādām*.

<sup>64</sup> D. Winton Thomas (“A Consideration of Isaiah liii in the Light of Recent Textual and Philological Study,” *ETL* 44 [1968] 82) comments, “The Servant thus forsakes the company of men, he stands aloof from human society. The Hebrew verb is active in sense, not passive.” Cf. also Driver, “Isaiah 52 12–53 13,” 92; C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster; London: SCM, 1969) 262.

<sup>65</sup> Of course, *ūkēmastēr pānīm mimmennū* in v. 3c can be translated either “as one (people) hides (their) face from” or “as one who hides (his) face from us.” The latter would fit well with the meaning of *ḥādal bēnē ʿādām* proposed here (see also Winton Thomas, “Consideration of Isaiah liii,” 83).

<sup>66</sup> For example, in Gen 12:17; 1 Sam 6:9; 2 Kgs 15:5; 2 Chr 26:20; Job 2:5; 19:21; Ps 73:5, 14. Cf. Akkadian *lapātu*, also meaning “to touch,” in the baneful sense of inflicting disease on someone (said of gods and demons). Note also that various diseases are called in Akkadian *lipit* + divine name, “the ‘touch’ of the god X” (*CAD*, L. 88, 201-2).

Here it occurs in juxtaposition with *mukkēh ʿēlōhīm*, “god-smitten.”<sup>67</sup> By the use of these terms the “great ones” understood the Servant’s sufferings—at least the ones mentioned in this stanza—as afflictions sent by God.

In the next bicolon (53:5ab) two more terms are used to describe the Servant’s affliction: *mēhōlāl* and *mēdukke*,<sup>68</sup> literally, “pierced” and “crushed.” Some interpreters have seized upon the literal meaning of *hll*, “pierce,” alleging that this refers to the Servant’s violent death brought on by his enemies. According to one exegete, this verb alludes to the Servant’s impalement or crucifixion,<sup>68</sup> surely an outlandish example of historicization. In point of fact, the term is used figuratively in a number of passages. Note especially Ps 69:27, with its reference to “the one whom you pierced (*hālālākā*).”<sup>69</sup> In this passage the “piercing” of the psalmist is obviously figurative, and it certainly does not refer to his death. In Ps 38:3a the psalmist complains, “Your arrows have sunk into me.” Arrows sinking into one’s flesh are equivalent to piercing and are also a figurative description of Yahweh’s wrathful discipline. In the parallel colon (Ps 38:3b) “your hand” probably denotes physical illness, as does “the hand of (the god X)” frequently in the ancient Near East.<sup>70</sup> Together these parallel expressions denote extreme physical suffering of divine origin.

Perhaps the clearest evidence that God is the agent of the Servant’s suffering described by *mēhōlāl* and *mēdukke*<sup>69</sup> comes from Isa 53:10ab, which contains the same two roots in reversed order, with Yahweh as subject. This second occurrence of the word pair means that this passage harks back to 53:5ab, implying that there too Yahweh is to be understood as the cause of these afflictions.

In the last bicolon in stanza four the author speaks of the Servant’s *mūsār*, “discipline, chastisement.” This term has also been taken as a reference to the

<sup>67</sup> For the use of *nky* (hiphil) in the sense of a divinely inflicted plague, see especially Deut 28:27-28, 35; also 1 Sam 4:8; Num 11:33; 1 Chr 21:7. Related to this is the satan’s smiting of Job (*wayyak*) with the dreaded *šēhīn rā*<sup>c</sup> (Job 2:7; cf. Deut 28:35). Cf. Akkadian *maḥṣam bēl ūrim*, “(one) ‘smitten’ by (the demon called) ‘the Lord of the Roof’” (*CAD*, M/1. 115) and the verb *maḥāsu*, which can denote being “smitten” with disease by gods or demons (*ibid.*, 75-76). Although some commentators (e.g., Winton Thomas, “Consideration of Isaiah liii,” 83; *idem*, “A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew,” *VT* 3 [1953] 209-24; *idem*, “Some Further Remarks on Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew,” *VT* 18 [1968] 120-24) opt for the possibility of taking *ʿēlōhīm* in *mukkēh ʿēlōhīm* as a superlative, “smitten to the utmost,” I maintain that the phrase is to be interpreted literally here.

<sup>68</sup> J. P. Brown, “Techniques of Imperial Control: The Background of the Gospel Event,” in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (ed. N. K. Gottwald; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983) 373.

<sup>69</sup> Literally, “of your pierced one” (the MT has *hālālākā*).

<sup>70</sup> For the biblical Hebrew expression, see “the hand of Yahweh” throughout the Ark Narrative in 1 Sam 4:1a-7:2, where this phrase denotes either Yahweh’s power or the plague he brings upon the Philistines.

persecution of the Servant, but the image points in a different direction. As I noted earlier, the *Sitz im Leben* of *mūsār* is wisdom (or at least instruction). In the majority of OT wisdom passages this term refers to physical punishment, a standard part of the training of youth in the ancient Near East. Traditionally this punishment was administered by the father—hence, the analogy of Yahweh “disciplining” his errant children. Psalm 38, cited above, alludes to this in its opening verse (v. 2), which contains the root *ysr* from which *mūsār* is derived: “Yahweh, do not . . . discipline me (*ʿal* . . . *tēyassērēnī*) in your wrath.”<sup>71</sup> In Isa 53:5cd *mūsār* is parallel to *ḥabbūrâtô*, “his bruising,” which also appears in Ps 38:6a (*ḥabbūrātī*, “my bruising”). Thus, the last bicolon of stanza four of the Servant song ends with the metaphor of God’s severe discipline as a kind of summary of the Servant’s sufferings in this stanza. The attempt to see this discipline as physical suffering at the hands of fellow Israelites or others misses the metaphor.<sup>72</sup>

To summarize, there is not a single term in part A that refers to any affliction of the Servant clearly brought about by human agency. Rather, the vocabulary is consistent in alluding to physical afflictions traditionally ascribed to the gods in ancient Near Eastern literature.<sup>73</sup>

### B. Stanzas Six through Nine

When we turn to part B, the 1st pl. forms disappear, yet we may suppose that the same group continues to speak here. Possibly those who belong to it retreat into anonymity at this point, because in this section of the poem there are unmistakable references to the Servant’s sufferings brought about by human agents, who may be the “we” of 53:1-6.

Part B opens with a colon containing two niph'al verbs: *niggās* and *naʿāneh* (53:7a). The first root, *ngś*, is capable of denoting very harsh treatment.<sup>74</sup> In

<sup>71</sup> Yahweh’s discipline could be quite severe, as in Isa 1:5-6. Even though the term *mūsār* does not appear in this passage, it unquestionably describes his stern discipline of his rebellious child, Israel (see vv. 2-4). This passage contains the term *tukkû*, the hophal of *nkʿ*, which appears in 53:4d (*mukkēh*), and also *ḥabbūrâ*, “bruise, wound,” which stands in parallelism to *mūsār* in 53:5d.

<sup>72</sup> An example is the description of v. 5cd as a “picture of legal punishment” offered by H. Graf von Reventlow (“Basic Issues in the Interpretation of Isaiah 53,” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* [ed. W. H. Bellinger, Jr., and W. R. Farmer; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998] 28). Note similarly the gratuitous assumption of Dahood (“Phoenician Elements in Isa 52:13-53:12,” 68) that this is “a judicial metaphor.” In the OT *mūsār* never occurs in a legal or a judicial context.

<sup>73</sup> “Reading vv. 4ff [i.e., stanza four] we think of an illness” (Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 264).

<sup>74</sup> It occurs thirteen times in the MT as a participle, in the majority of occurrences denoting a “taskmaster” (Exod 3:7; 5:6, 10, 13-14; Job 3:18; 39:7; Isa 9:4; 14:2, 4; 60:17; Zech 9:8; 10:4).

Isa 3:5 it refers to the people oppressing each other in a future age. Since this is followed immediately by a reference to youths being “insolent” to elders, the “oppression” envisioned is probably not physical. There are (only) two other examples of the verb in the niph'al, in 1 Sam 13:6 and 14:24, both of which refer to something more akin to psychological oppression. Thus, it is far from certain that any physical hostility is alluded to in Isa 53:7a. A translation such as “tortured” is without justification.<sup>75</sup>

A number of English translators render 53:7a: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted.”<sup>76</sup> There are two problems with this translation. First, if the two verbs were correlative, one would not expect *hûʔ* before the second verb. Waw + *hûʔ* between the two verbs indicates an adversative rather than a correlative relationship between them: “He was hard pressed, *but he*. . . .”<sup>77</sup> Second, the frequent translation of the niph'al *naʿāneh*, “afflicted” can hardly be correct. When the root ʿny/w II denotes oppression, it appears in the piel and pual. Hence, the pual *mēʿunneh* in v. 4d properly means “afflicted” (and God is most likely the agent). But the few clear instances of the niph'al mean “to show humility, humble oneself.”<sup>78</sup> In this passage the verb expresses the Servant’s meek response to harsh treatment: “He was maltreated, yet he was submissive.” That *naʿāneh* has this sense here is clear from the following colon, “and (he) did not open his mouth,” which similarly expresses refusal to protest or cry out against mistreatment.

In stanza six two similes are used to describe the Servant’s passive reaction to his treatment. The first has been often misinterpreted because of a failure to understand the syntax. *kaššeh laʿtebah yûbāl* (53:7c) contains an unmarked relative clause which was missed by the ancient versions and by a number of modern translations as well.<sup>79</sup> It cannot be translated “he was led like a sheep to the slaughter” but only “like a sheep *that* is led to the slaughter,” as is obvious from another example of the idiom in Jer 11:18, “I, like a trusting lamb *that is* led (*yûbal*) to the slaughter.” Even though this simile casts a foreboding shadow over the Servant, it is not a reference to his death. It is the vehicle of a simile, and the tenor is the Servant’s meek silence.

If there is any mention of the death of the Servant in this poem, it is probably in stanza seven (53:8). Unfortunately, the passage is fraught with difficulties. The chief point of contention in the first bicolon is the word ʿōšer.

<sup>75</sup> “Tortured” is in Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 254. (The English translation is by David M. H. Stalker.)

<sup>76</sup> For example, in the *RSV*

<sup>77</sup> See Driver, “Isaiah 52 12–53 13,” 94.

<sup>78</sup> It has this sense in Exod 10:3, where Yahweh says to Pharaoh through Moses: “How long will you refuse to humble yourself (*lʿānōi*) before me?”

<sup>79</sup> LXX: ὡς πρόβατον εἰς σφαγὴν ἤχθη, “he was led like sheep to the slaughter”; Vg: *sicut ovis ad occisionem ducetur*, “he shall be led like a sheep to the slaughter.” Cf. the *KJV* and the *NIV*

In the MT there are two passages in which a nominal form of this root is frequently translated “oppression”: Judg 18:7 (*‘ešer*) and Ps 107:39 (*ōšer*).<sup>80</sup> But the verbal root generally means “to detain, shut up.”<sup>81</sup> A number of commentators believe that the noun has this meaning here.<sup>82</sup> If so, it denotes forcible restraint of some kind, though not necessarily imprisonment. The force of the preposition *min* is unclear here. Does it mean “from,” or “after”? I opt for the latter, since *luqqāh* (“he was taken away”) would logically occur after the Servant’s detention and *mišpāt*, a term that must allude to some legal proceeding or to a legal decision taken by the authorities.

In the next colon *dōrō* is certainly not “generation,” its usual meaning. The root *dwr* can mean “to dwell” in Amorite,<sup>83</sup> Aramaic,<sup>84</sup> and Arabic,<sup>85</sup> and the noun *dōr* may denote a “dwelling” in Isa 38:12. If this is what the word signifies here, there is a logical connection between *luqqāh* and the following colon. In the wake of the decision to take the Servant away no thought was given about where he would dwell once this had been done.

Ultimately, whether or not the Servant is said to die in this poem comes down to how one interprets the next bicolon, 53:8cd. But we shall begin with the second colon, since there are questions about the reading of certain terms.

The colon 53:8d begins with the expression *mippeša<sup>c</sup> ‘ammī*, “because of the transgression of my people.” One should probably read *‘mw*, “his people,” with 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. The second problem is the noun *nega<sup>c</sup>*, which we, with 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> should read *nugga<sup>c</sup>*, the pual of *ng<sup>c</sup>*. This is immediately followed by *lāmō*, which could mean either “to him” or “to them.” But the LXX reads (ἦχθη) εἰς θάνατον, “(he was led away) to death” (= Hebrew *lmwt*). A number of commentators accept this reading as preferable to the MT and find in it a reference to the Servant’s death,<sup>86</sup> but there are serious objections to such a position. First, not only do none of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts reflect such a reading, but to accept it would mean emending the MT’s *lāmō* to *lēmāwet* and, in addition, emending the preceding verb, since by no stretch

<sup>80</sup> Some take this as a hendiadys with the next word, *ūmimmišpāt*, and translate “by a perverted judgment”; see, for example, McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 130.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, 2 Kgs 17:4; Jer 33:1; 39:15.

<sup>82</sup> So Winton Thomas, “Consideration of Isaiah liii,” 84; Driver, “Isaiah 52 12–53 13,” 94; J. Mulenburg, “The Book of Isaiah: Text, Exegesis, and Exposition, Chs. 40–66,” *IB*, 5. 626; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 254.

<sup>83</sup> See R. Zadok, “On the Amorite Material from Mesopotamia,” in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo* (ed. M. E. Cohen, D. C. Snell and D. B. Weisberg; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993) 322.

<sup>84</sup> See Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 142.

<sup>85</sup> Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 931.

<sup>86</sup> Among them are North, *Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah*, 125; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 254; McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 130.

of the imagination can the root *ng<sup>c</sup>* mean “to lead.” Second, the fact that in the first appearance of the pair *ng<sup>c</sup>* || *ny/w* in stanza four (53:4cd) a passive verbal form of *ng<sup>c</sup>* occurs in juxtaposition to *mukkēh ʾēlōhīm*, “god-smitten,” suggests that God is to be understood as the agent of *nugga<sup>c</sup>* in stanza seven as well. Third, stanzas four and seven also have in common the fact that both conclude with a rare construction, a passive verb followed by the preposition *lē-* + pronominal suffix. Verse 5d makes a connection between the Servant and the people which is precisely reversed in v. 8d: “because of *his* bruising, *we* were healed (*nirpāʾ lānū*),” on the one hand, and “for the transgression of *his people* he was stricken (*nugga<sup>c</sup> lāmō*),” on the other.<sup>87</sup> Thus one is well advised not to follow the LXX and change *lāmō* to *lāmāwet*.<sup>88</sup>

We return now to the preceding colon, 53:8c, which states that the Servant “was (or “had been”) cut off from the land of the living.” For those who see a reference to the Servant’s death in this poem this is the trump card. Comparison is inevitably made with Jer 11:19, where the prophet’s enemies are plotting to kill him: “Let us cut him off (*wēnikrētennū*) from the land of the living.”<sup>89</sup>

But the passage in Jeremiah does not decide the question of the meaning of the similar expression in Isa 53:8c. First, the Servant is spoken of as being alive several verses later (vv. 10c, 11b). Second, it is possible that being cut off from “the land of the living” refers here to something other than death. In considering this alternative meaning, we look first at 2 Chr 26:21, which has several striking verbal connections with Isa 53:8cd. These are the only two passages in the MT which contain both *nigzar min* and *ng<sup>c</sup>* in the “intensive” stem (*piel/pual*).

And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests turned to him [Uzziah] and behold, he was leprous on his forehead! And they hastened him out of there—and he too hurried to get out—*because Yahweh had struck him (kī nigge<sup>c</sup>ō yhw̄h)*. And King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death; and being a leper, he had to live in the house of quarantine[?],<sup>90</sup> for he had been excluded from the house of Yahweh (*kī nigzar mibbēt yhw̄h*). (2 Chr 26:20-21a)

<sup>87</sup> “His people” is roughly equivalent to the “we” who are speaking in v. 5.

<sup>88</sup> Note also the internal rhyme in this colon, which also argues for the reading *lāmō* here: *mippeša<sup>c</sup> ʿammō | nugga<sup>c</sup> lāmō*.

<sup>89</sup> This statement is preceded by *nišhitā ʿēš bilēhēmō* (MT: *bēlahmō*), “Let us destroy the tree in its vigor” (literally, “in its sap”). With this parallel line it is hard to understand being “cut off from the land of the living” here as anything but a plot to kill Jeremiah.

<sup>90</sup> The meaning of (*byt*) *hḥpšwt* (*qere*, *hḥpšyt*, as in 2 Kgs 15:5) is disputed. Given the context of the accounts in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles it must denote some kind of separated (i.e., quarantined) area.

The first *kî* clause is a very close match with Isa 53:8d: *niggē<sup>c</sup>ô yhw<sup>h</sup>*, “Yahweh had struck him,” is simply the active form of *nugga<sup>c</sup> lāmô*, “he was stricken,” for, as we have seen, Yahweh is the implied agent. But what about *nigzar mibbêt yhw<sup>h</sup>* and *nigzar mē<sup>c</sup>eres<sup>c</sup> hayyîm*? In an earlier article I argued that *eres<sup>c</sup> (ha)hayyîm* has a broader meaning than “the land of the living.”<sup>91</sup> In some passages it functions as a name of the temple of Jerusalem and may be translated “the land of life.”<sup>92</sup> If this is the case here, the Servant was not killed but was excluded from the temple.<sup>93</sup> In the ancient Near East this was the consequence of certain chronic dermatological conditions often inaccurately called leprosy in popular literature. In Akkadian “leprosy” (*saḥaršuppû*) curses that speak of one’s being cut off from the temple, it is always the god himself who effects the excommunication.<sup>94</sup> So, in Isa 53:8a being cut off from the temple—if that is what the colon means—is to be understood as a “divine passive,” like *nugga<sup>c</sup>* in the parallel colon.<sup>95</sup>

The parallel with the narrative about Uzziah naturally raises again the question of whether or not the Servant is depicted as a leper in this poem.<sup>96</sup> A number of factors suggest this. First, 52:14 and 53:2 indicate that there was something repelling about the Servant’s physical appearance. Second, as we have seen the verbs *ng<sup>c</sup>* and *nky* (hiphil/hophal) are used elsewhere in the OT to denote divinely imposed illness, including dermatological afflictions.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the vocabulary of “leprosy” is most likely present here, though it is conceivable that the author is using it in a metaphorical sense to describe the Servant’s condition.

<sup>91</sup> M. L. Barré, “רֶשֶׁת (h)hayym—‘The Land of the Living?’” *JSOT* 41 (1988) 37-59.

<sup>92</sup> For example, Ps 27:13; 52:7; 56:14; 116:9; possibly in Isa 38:11.

<sup>93</sup> The (post)exilic date of the Servant songs, in a time when the temple was no longer standing, does not preclude this interpretation. We cannot be certain whether the portrait of the Servant is intended to be “historical” or is a reference to someone supposedly contemporary with the author. The reference to dermatological affliction may be metaphorical, part of the poet’s effort to present a worst-case scenario of a “god-smitten” person (as when Job was stricken with *šēḥîn rā<sup>c</sup>*, the worst possible skin affliction [Job 2:7; cf. Deut 28:35]). This disease would have entailed exclusion from the community as well as from the presence of the deity, that is, from the temple of Jerusalem.

<sup>94</sup> See M. L. Barré and J. S. Kselman, “New Exodus, Covenant, and Restoration in Psalm 23,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (American Schools of Oriental Research, Special Volume Series 1; ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O’Connor; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 110 and 120 nn. 65-66; see especially K. Watanabe, “Die literarische Überlieferung eines babylonisch-assyrischen Fluchthemas mit Anrufung des Mondgottes Sin,” *Acta Sumerologica* 6 (1984) 103, 108-9.

<sup>95</sup> This also may explain the *kî* “for,” in this verse. The harsh actions taken against the Servant by his countrymen were motivated by their conviction that God *had* cut him off from the temple and *had* smitten him with disease.

<sup>96</sup> This theory was advanced by B. Duhm in his *Das Buch Jesaja übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttinger HKAT 3/1; 4th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922) 396-401.

<sup>97</sup> See above, nn. 66-67.

The explicit reference to the Servant's grave in stanza eight (53:9ab) is often taken as clinching the argument that he has died, especially as it comes on the heels of the expression "cut off from the land of the living." But the evidence supporting this view is much weaker than might first appear, for four reasons.

First, v. 9ab does not indicate that the Servant had been buried or that his grave had been dug. The expression *ntn qeber* never has this meaning. Rather, it denotes a grave (or gravesite) being *placed* or *assigned* to someone.<sup>98</sup> The expression has this sense in Ezek 32:23; 39:11 and is probably synonymous with *šym qeber*, "to assign (one's) grave(site)," in Nah 1:14.<sup>99</sup> Thus, the passage has to do with a *prerequisite* for the Servant's burial, not the burial itself.

Second, those who deny a reference to the Servant's death in this passage rightly appeal to several Babylonian poems which speak of burial rites being performed for the sufferer while he is still alive. This topos underlines the apparent hopelessness of the protagonist's situation.<sup>100</sup> Such passages advise against jumping to the conclusion that the Servant has been buried because of the reference to his grave in Isa 53:9ab.<sup>101</sup>

Third, the question must be asked, What is emphasized in this reference to the Servant's grave? As the text stands, the two words preceded by the preposition *ʔet* (*ʔet-rēšāʿim* and *ʔet-ʿāšīr*) are highlighted. Literally, this colon should be rendered, "It was *with the wicked* that his grave(site) was placed

<sup>98</sup> C. C. Torrey (*The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* [New York: Scribners, 1928] 420) was correct in insisting that *ntn* in this context be translated "assigned" or something similar: "They did not dig his grave, they 'assigned' it, a signification of the verb here which is very common."

<sup>99</sup> Here *ʿāšīm qibrekā* (*kī qallôtā*) should likewise be translated, "I will place [or "assign"] your grave (because you are accursed)." "Set, fix, determine" are well documented nuances of *šym*, and this root forms a word pair with *ntn* (see Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs*, 640-41).

<sup>100</sup> Three such texts are known: (1) *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, 2. 114-15 (for the text, see W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960) 46; for the translation, see B. R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* [2 vols.; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993] 1. 317; *CAD*, M/2, 144); (2) a poem from Ugarit with a number of similarities to *Ludlul*, lines 9'-12' (for the text, see J. Nougayrol, "Textes suméro-accadiens des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit," in *Ugaritica V* [Mission de Ras Shamra 16; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale/Geuthner, 1968] 267 [in line 9' read *paḥ-rat* instead of *ḥu-rat*]); (3) a Babylonian prayer to Ishtar, lines 146-47 (for the text, see W. G. Lambert, "Three Literary Prayers of the Babylonians," *AJO* 19 [1959-60] 52, but in line 146 read *i-ḥāš-[šá-šú]* instead of the *i-šip-[šú]* in Lambert's edition [see *CAD*, L. 48; S. 93]; for the translation, see M.-J. Seux, *Hymnes et prières aux dieux de Babylonie et d'Assyrie* [LAP0 8; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1976] 196-97). In the first two texts the sufferer is delivered from death by Marduk; the conclusion of the last text is fragmentary and, thus, unclear.

<sup>101</sup> Driver ("Isaiah 52 12-53 13," 102) comments: "'His grave was appointed' in such and such a place, which does not necessarily imply that he was ever laid in it."

[or “assigned”].<sup>102</sup> The subsequent colon apparently makes essentially the same point.<sup>103</sup> The emphasis of the verse lies not on the act of burial but rather on the decision to bury the Servant *with the wicked*. Such an action would classify him for all generations as an evildoer. That this is what the verse has chiefly in mind is corroborated by v. 12d, “And he was numbered among transgressors.”

Finally, this stanza, like the previous one, concludes with an allusion to part A by means of the “reversed pair”—in this case, *dk* and *hll* in v. 10b. In the context of the previous line (v. 9cd) v. 10ab makes the point that *even though* the Servant had done no wrong, *nevertheless* it was Yahweh’s will to “crush” and “pierce” him.

It is widely suspected that the last stanza in the body of this Servant song (53:10c-11b) holds the key to the controversy about the Servant’s fate. The text has five *yiqtol* verb forms referring to the Servant, which suggests events in the future. Tantalizingly, the very first colon of this stanza (53:10c) is a notorious crux.

The MT of v. 10c reads *ʔim tāšim ʔāšām napšō*, which may be literally translated “if you make his life a guilt-offering.” This would assume that the subject of the 2d sg. verb is Yahweh, whose name appears in the previous bicolon (v. 10a). But what sense does a conditional sentence make here? It is abundantly clear from the first half of the poem alone that Yahweh has *already* made his Servant’s life a guilt offering. Some simply emend *tāšim* to *yāšim*, the 3d masc. sg., following the Vulgate: “If *he* makes his life a guilt-offering.”<sup>104</sup> But one is hard pressed to explain how a yod could be read as a tav.

Begrich proposed reversing the consonants of *ʔm* and reading *heḥēlim ʔet-šām ʔāšām napšō*, “(Yahweh) healed him who made himself a guilt offering.”<sup>105</sup> The proposal is objectionable not only on textual grounds—the last word in v. 10b must be from the root *hll*, not *hlm* (cf. 53:5ab)—but also from the standpoint of stichometry. If the word following *dakkēʔō* is removed from the bicolon in which it stands and made a part of the following colon, 53:10ab becomes either a monocolon or a severely truncated bicolon whose second colon consists of a single word, *dakkēʔō*. Neither is likely.

<sup>102</sup> Interpreting *wayyittēn* as a verb with impersonal subject—literally, “and one gave” = “and it was given.” Note the same usage of *wayyittēn* in Ezek 21:16 (see M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37* [AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997] 423).

<sup>103</sup> Verse 9b has occasioned a fair amount of controversy. Because of its complexity and the limitations of space, I shall not discuss it in this paper.

<sup>104</sup> So the *NAB*.

<sup>105</sup> J. Begrich, *Studien zu Deuterocesaja* reprint (ed. W. Zimmerli; TBü 20; Munich: Kaiser, 1963) 64.

Dahood suggested redividing the  $\text{ʔ}m \text{ } tšym$  of 53:10c into  $\text{ʔ}mt \text{ } šm$  ( $\text{ʔ}əmet \text{ } šām$ ), “Truly he has made (his life a guilt-offering).”<sup>106</sup> Although this rendering is possible, it creates an awkward syntax with the following colon. How does one explain the sudden statement “he will see (his) offspring”? The translation proposed does not prepare the reader for this abrupt transition.

I propose yet another reading of 53:10c, understanding the last stanza of the body as a prayer addressed to Yahweh for the Servant’s recovery and restoration. This entails dividing the MT’s  $tšym \text{ } ʔšm$  as  $tšy$  (or possibly  $tš$ )  $mʔšm$ , vocalizing the result as  $taššī/tašše \text{ } mēʔāšam$  ( $napšō$ ), “O that you would let (him) forget his punishment” (or: “O that you would consign his punishment to oblivion!”).<sup>107</sup> In this translation I take  $\text{ʔ}im$  to mean “O that,” an attested meaning of this particle,<sup>108</sup> and read a 2d masc. sg. verb hiphil from the root  $nšy \text{ } I$ , “to forget”; the verb form could be  $taššī$  with the archaic 2d masc. sg. ending,<sup>109</sup> as in Deut 32:18,<sup>110</sup> or  $tašše$  without final  $-h$  (cf. Mic 6:10).<sup>111</sup> The reading proposed for Isa 53:10c is supported by Job 11:6, where Zophar tells Job that God might speak to him “so that you may realize that he can cause you to forget your iniquity/punishment” ( $wēdaʿ \text{ } kī\text{-}yaššeḥ \text{ } lēkā \text{ } ʔēlōah \text{ } mēʿāwōnekā$ ).<sup>112</sup> The usage of  $nšy \text{ } I$ , “forget,” with  $min$  before the object is attested in the Aramaic dialects.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>106</sup> This was first proposed by M. Dahood in “Textual Problems in Isaiah,” *CBQ* 22 (1960) 406.

<sup>107</sup> For “punishment,” the secular meaning of  $\text{ʔ}āšām$  (and the sense in which I understand the term here), see J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 341.

<sup>108</sup> See *HALAT*, 58.

<sup>109</sup> See GKC §75ii.

<sup>110</sup> In Deut 32:18 the verb occurs in the qal 2d masc. sg., parallel to  $wattiškāḥ$  (for  $nšy$  and  $škḥ$  as a word pair, see Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word Pairs*, 676).

<sup>111</sup> Mic 6:10 has  $haʿešše$  [MT,  $haʿīš$ ]  $bēt \text{ } rāšāʿ$  ||  $\text{ʔ}ōšērōt \text{ } rešaʿ$ , “Am I to forget [or “overlook”] the wicked house, the storehouses of wickedness?” Note that in Isa 53:10c 4QIsa<sup>d</sup> reads  $tšm$  instead of  $tšym$ , which would support the reading  $tašše \text{ } mē-$ .

<sup>112</sup> Some commentators (e.g., N. C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster; London: SCM, 1985] 202-3; cf. the *NEB*) derive the verb from the hiphil of  $nšy \text{ } II$  (i.e.,  $nšʔ \text{ } I$ ), “to exact (payment) from,” rather than  $nšy \text{ } I$ , “to forget.” But  $kī \text{ } ʔattā \text{ } ʿāmāl \text{ } tiškāḥ$ , “For you will forget (your) misery,” in v. 16 argues for the latter derivation. Most of those who translate  $nšy$  as “forget” take the preposition  $min$  before  $\text{ʿ}wōnekā$  in a partitive sense, “(God will cause you to forget) *some* of your iniquity.” In *HALAT*, 688 the  $min$  is interpreted in this case as marking the thing forgotten (“c[um] ʔ pers[onae] et ʔ rei”).

<sup>113</sup> This construction appears in the *Targum of the Prophets* (*Targum Jonathan*) to Jer 50:6 with the verb in the ethpeel:  $\text{ʔ}nšyʔw \text{ } mbyi \text{ } rwḥšwn$ , “they have forgotten their *place of trust*” (for the translation, see R. Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah* [Aramaic Bible 12; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987] 180). Here,  $mbyi$  is  $mibbēt$  ( $min + bêt$ ) with  $min$  governing the object of the verb. See also C. Brockelmann (*Lexicon Syriacum* [2d ed.; Halle: Straus & Cramer, 1928] 450), who mentions an example of the ethpeel with the preposition  $men$ . Similarly, the verb  $pdd$ ,

The four-word colon in Isa 53:10c is followed by another four-word colon (v. 10d), with a caesura in the middle, containing two precative verbs, *yir<sup>2</sup>eh* and *ya<sup>2</sup>ʾrīk*. The next line (v. 10e) I take to be an addition. It hardly reads like a poetic line at all, and it does not fit the prayer context of this stanza.

The next bicolon (v. 11ab) is exactly half the size of v. 10cd, and it too has a caesura in the middle of the second colon. The key to understanding this couplet is to realize that *ʿim tašši/tašše* (from v. 10c) is to be understood at the beginning of v. 11a: “O that you would let him forget his travail!”<sup>114</sup>

As the second colon of v. 10cd contains two precative verbs, so does v. 11b. In this case these form a word pair (*r<sup>2</sup>y* II and *šb*⌒), as do *dk<sup>2</sup>* and *hll* at the end of the previous stanza. As a number of commentators have noted, this *yir<sup>2</sup>eh* in v. 11b, unlike the *yir<sup>2</sup>eh* in v. 10d, is from a byform of *rw*y, “to irrigate, sate.”<sup>115</sup> Failure to understand this was responsible for the insertion of the word “light” after this word in a number of ancient manuscripts and versions.<sup>116</sup> The two-word colon 11b is quite elliptical, but the verbs undoubtedly express hope for the Servant’s refreshment and restoration after his terrible ordeal. The image of irrigation applied to him in this last stanza of the body forms a contrast with *šiyyā*, “(arid) wasteland,” associated with him in the first stanza of the body.

Since this ninth stanza (53:10c-11b) is a prayer, it goes without saying that as far as the poet is concerned, the Servant is still alive. Thus, there is no reference here to his death or to his “resurrection.”

“to forget,” in the Syriac *aphel* (“to cause to forget”) can take either the accusative of the thing forgotten or *men* + the thing forgotten (*ibid.*, 557).

<sup>114</sup> Another passage with this structure (i.e., a gapped verb preceded by [*ki*] *ʿim*) is Amos 5:22, which I would scan as follows:

*ki ʿim-ta<sup>c</sup>ālū-lī ʿōlōt ūminḥōtēkem*  
*lō<sup>2</sup> ʿeršeh*  
*wēššēlāmīm* [MT, *šelem*] *mēriʿēkem*  
*lō<sup>2</sup> ʿabbī*

Even though you offer me your holocausts and offerings,

I will not accept (them).

(Even though you offer me) your communion sacrifices (and) fat cattle,

I will not look at (them).

F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman (*Amos* [AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989] 523) arrange the two bicola similarly.

<sup>115</sup> On this root, see G. R. Driver, “Another Little Drink—Isa 28:1-22,” in *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented to David Winton Thomas on His Retirement from the Regius Professorship of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge, 1968* (ed. P. R. Ackroyd and B. Lindars; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) 52. Passages in which *r<sup>2</sup>y* II is thought to occur are Isa 22:9; 28:7; Jer 31:14; Pss 36:9; 40:13; 50:23; 60:5; 91:16; Job 10:15; 20:17; 31:7; 33:21.

<sup>116</sup> Note φῶς in the LXX and *ʿwr* in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>; 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>; 4QIsa<sup>d</sup>.

## V. Conclusion

I have tried to establish the structure of the last Deutero-Isaian Servant song and to take note of some of its salient rhetorical features. On the basis of these findings I have drawn some conclusions about the content of the poem. Evidence from the prologue-epilogue as well as from the body of the song establish the fact that the Servant is cast in the role of a wisdom figure. This contrasts with the other Servant songs, whose main characterization of the Servant is quite different—in them, he is portrayed as a royal or prophetic figure, for example. No speech of any kind is attributed to him in this song. He does not open his mouth, not even to intercede. His “teaching”—or rather, Yahweh’s teaching through him—consists of what God does to him rather than anything he accomplishes.

Further, I have tried to show that the Servant’s sufferings are primarily those inflicted upon him by Yahweh for his own mysterious purpose. By comparison, what the Servant suffers at the hands of fellow human beings consists almost exclusively of being arrested, being taken away from his home(land?) by judicial decree, and being classified with sinners. Everything in the song itself indicates that those responsible for this treatment of him act not so much out of malicious intent as from the conviction that he is accursed by God, a conviction that would lead ancient Near Eastern authorities to remove such a person from contact with others in the community. In the body of the poem, however, these same authorities speak as people who have finally come to realize that the Servant’s miseries, which caused his expulsion, were in some mysterious way suffered vicariously for their sake. The body of the poem ends not with the Servant’s death, as is frequently believed, but with a prayer for his restoration.

. . . . .

In the following appendix, readings of the Hebrew text differing from the MT that have been explained above will not be treated.

## APPENDIX

## Emended Text and Translation of Isaiah 52:13–53:12

## Stanza 1: The Prologue

- 52:13a *hinnēh yaškīl ‘abdī rām*  
 b *wēnīssāʾ wēgābōah mēʾōd*  
 14a *kaʾāšer šāmēmū ‘ālāyw<sup>a</sup>*  
*rabbīm*  
 b *kī<sup>b</sup> mošhāt(i)<sup>c</sup> mēʾiṣ marʾēhū*  
 c *wēiṭʾārō mibbēnē ʾādām*  
 15a *kēn yizhū gōyīm rabbīm ‘ālāyw*  
 b *wēqāpēšū mēlakīm pihem*  
 c *kī ʾāšer lōʾ suppar lāhem rāʾū*  
 d *waʾāšer lōʾ šāmēʿū hitbônānū*
- Behold, my Servant instructs the high,  
 the exalted, the exceedingly lofty.  
 Just (as surely) as the great ones were  
 desolated over him,  
 so disfigured were his looks (beyond  
 those of man!)  
 and his appearance (beyond that of hu-  
 man beings!)  
 So shall vast nations rejoice over him,  
 but kings shall shut their mouths;  
 For what had never been told them they  
 perceived,  
 what they had never heard they under-  
 stood.

## Stanza 2

- 53:1a *mī heʾemīn lišmēʿātēnū*  
 b *ūzērōa<sup>c</sup> yhw<sup>h</sup> ʾel<sup>d</sup> mī niglātā*  
 2a *wayyaʿal kayyōnēq lēpānēnū*  
 b *wēkaššōreš mēʾereš ṣiyyā*  
 c *lōʾ tōʾār lō {wēlōʾ hādār}<sup>c</sup>*  
*wēnirʾēhū*  
 d *wēlōʾ marʾeh wēnehmēdēhū*
- Who could have believed what we have  
 heard?  
 Who has grasped the revelation of Yah-  
 weh’s power?  
 He sprang up before us like a (scrub)  
 shoot,  
 like a root (sprouting) out of the waste-  
 land.  
 He had no appearance that would make  
 us look at him,  
 no looks that would attract us to him.

## Stanza 3

- 53:3a *nibzēhū ḥādal bēnē ʾādām*  
 b *ʾiṣ makʾōbōt | wēyōdēa<sup>c</sup> ḥolī*  
 c *ūkēmastēr pānīm mimmennū*  
 d *nibzēhū wēlōʾ ḥāšabnūhū*
- We disesteemed him (as) one withdrawn  
 from people,  
 a man of pains, familiar with disease;  
 Like someone who hides (his) face from us,  
 we disesteemed him and had no regard  
 for him.

## Stanza 4

- 53:4a *ʾākēn ḥolyēnu hūʾ nāsāʾ*  
 b *ūmakʾōbēnū sēbālām*  
 c *waʾānaḥnū ḥāšabnūhū nāgūa<sup>c</sup>*  
 d *mukkēh ʾēlōhīm ūmēʿunneh*
- Yet it was *our* disease that he bore,  
*our* pains that he carried;  
 As for us, we regarded him as one stricken,  
 god-smitten, and afflicted;

- 53:5a *wēhū<sup>2</sup> mēhōlāl mippiš<sup>c</sup>ēnū* But he was “pierced” for *our* transgressions,  
 b *mēdukke<sup>2</sup> mē<sup>c</sup>āwōnōtēnū* “crushed” for *our* iniquities;  
 c *mūsar šēlōmēnu <sup>c</sup>ālāyw* The discipline that brings our well-being  
 was (laid) on him,  
 d *ūbahābūrātō nirpā<sup>2</sup> lānū* and by his bruising we were healed.

## Stanza 5

- 53:6a *kullānū kaššō<sup>2</sup>n tā<sup>c</sup>īnū* All of us had gone astray like sheep,  
 b *īš lēdarkō pānīnū* each had headed in his own direction;  
 c *wēyhwh hipgīa<sup>c</sup> bō* Yet Yahweh caused the iniquity of us all  
 d *ē<sup>2</sup>t āwōn kullānū* to fall upon him.

## Stanza 6

- 53:7a *niggaš wēhū<sup>2</sup> na<sup>c</sup>āneh* Though hard pressed, he responded meekly  
 b *wēlō<sup>2</sup> yiptah pīw* and did not open his mouth;  
 c *kaššeh laṭṭebah yūbāl* Like a sheep led to the slaughter,  
 d *ūkērāhēl lipnē gōzēzēhā* like a ewe before her shearers,  
 e *ne<sup>2</sup>ēlām<sup>8</sup> wēlō<sup>2</sup> yiptah pīw* he was silent and did not open his mouth.

## Stanza 7

- 53:8a *mē<sup>c</sup>oṣer ūmimmišpāt luqqāh* After detention and judgment he was taken  
 away,  
 b *wē<sup>2</sup>et dōrō mī yēšōhāh* and as for where he would dwell (then),  
 who cared?  
 c *kī nigzar mē<sup>2</sup>ereṣ hayyim* For he had been excluded from the “land  
 of life/the living,”  
 d *mippeša<sup>c</sup> ammō | nugga<sup>c</sup> lāmō* stricken for the transgressions of his people.

## Stanza 8

- 53:9a *wayyittēn <sup>2</sup>et-rēšā<sup>c</sup>īm qibrō* Among the wicked he was assigned a grave,  
 b *wē<sup>2</sup>et āšīr bōmātō* among the rich, a burial-mound,  
 c *al lō<sup>2</sup> hāmās āsā* Although he had done no violence,  
 d *wēlō<sup>2</sup> mīrmā bēpīw* and there was no deceit in his mouth;  
 10a *wēyhwh hāpēš* Nevertheless Yahweh had willed  
 b *dakkē<sup>2</sup>ō | hōlēlō* to “crush” him, to “pierce” him.

## Stanza 9

- 53:10c *im taššī/tašše mē<sup>2</sup>āšam napšō* O that you would let him forget his guilt/  
 punishment,  
 d *yir<sup>2</sup>eh zera<sup>c</sup> | ya<sup>2</sup>ārik yāmīm* let him see (his) offspring, let him lengthen  
 (his) days!  
 e *{wēhēpeš yhwh bēyādō yišlāh}* {And the will of Yahweh will enjoy success  
 through him}.
- 11a *mē<sup>c</sup>āmal napšō* (O that you would let him forget) his travail,  
 b *yir<sup>2</sup>eh | yīsbā<sup>c</sup>* let him be refreshed, let him be satisfied!

## Stanza 10: The Epilogue

53:11c <i>bēda<sup>c</sup>tō yašdīq {šaddīq}</i> <i>‘abdi lērabīm</i>	By his wisdom my Servant makes the great ones righteous,
d <i>wa<sup>c</sup>‘āwōnōtām hū<sup>’</sup> yisbōl</i>	and their iniquities he carries.
12a <i>lākēn Ṿāhallēq lō bērabīm</i>	Therefore, I will give him a share with the great ones,
b <i>wē<sup>’</sup>et ‘āšūmīm yahālōq<sup>h</sup></i> <i>šālāl</i>	and with the powerful he shall divide spoil;
c <i>taḥat Ṿāšer ho<sup>c</sup>rā<sup>’</sup> lammāwet</i> <i>napšō</i>	Because his life was poured out to the utmost, <sup>i</sup>
d <i>wē<sup>’</sup>et pōšē<sup>c</sup>‘im nimnā</i>	and he was numbered among transgressors;
e <i>wēhū<sup>’</sup> ḥē<sup>’</sup>Ṿ rabbīm nāsā<sup>’</sup></i>	And (because) he bore the sin of the great ones,
f <i>ūlēpiš<sup>c</sup>‘ām hōpā<sup>c</sup></i>	and their transgression was made to fall upon (him).

<sup>a</sup> Reading the preposition with the 3d masc. sg. suffix instead of the 2d masc. sg. suffix as in the MT (*‘alēkā*), which makes no sense in the context.

<sup>b</sup> The MT reads *kēn* here, but this is premature (*kēn* occurs in its proper place, as a coordinate to *ka<sup>’</sup>āšer*, in v. 15a). McKenzie (*Second Isaiah*, 129) also reads *kī*.

<sup>c</sup> The hophal participle. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> adds the termination *-i*, which is probably to be regarded as the *hireq compaginis*, often found with such participles (cf. GKC §90m). The MT reads *mišḥat*.

<sup>d</sup> So read 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>. The MT has *‘al*.

<sup>e</sup> This phrase is possibly secondary. In this bicolon it occurs as an intrusive addition to the word pair *tō<sup>’</sup>ār || mar<sup>’</sup>eh*. A synonymous term coming between members of the reversed word pairs does not appear elsewhere in the poem.

<sup>f</sup> Following the reading of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>g</sup> The MT reads the feminine form, *ne<sup>’</sup>ēlāmā*, which has *rāḥēl* as its subject. But this reveals a misunderstanding of the simile. It may have arisen from the mistaken idea that since *šeh* has a verb (*yūbāl*), *rāḥēl* must have one too. The parallel to the image of the sheep being led to the slaughter is that of the ewe being before her shearers—both of them being threatening situations for these animals. The verb “was silent” belongs to the *tenor* of the simile, not the vehicle, and it is synonymous with “he did not open his mouth.” It is therefore predicated of the Servant, not the ewe. Cf. also Ps 39:10, where *ʾlm* (niphāl) constitutes a colon with “did not open (one’s) mouth”: *ne<sup>’</sup>ēlamī lō<sup>’</sup> ʾeptah<sup>’</sup>-pī*, “I was silent (and) did not open my mouth.”

<sup>h</sup> Most commentators (e.g., Driver, “Isaiah 52 12–53 13,” 102) agree that here the MT has a mechanical (and erroneous) copy of the same form of the verb (the piel) that appears in the previous colon, but the reading *yēhallēq* makes no sense with the Servant as subject, as one would expect him to “take” his share of the spoil (qal) rather than “apportion” it (piel).

<sup>i</sup> I follow the LXX here, which reads the passive, *παρεδόθη*. Cf. the similar expression in Job 30:16, where a passive form of a synonymous verb is used: *‘alay tištippek napšī*, “my soul is poured out within me.” The fact that *hor<sup>’</sup>ā* is masculine while its subject (*napšō*) is feminine is not a problem, since a feminine subject can take a masculine verb when the latter precedes the former (GKC §145o).

<sup>j</sup> On the use of *māwet*, “death,” to denote the superlative (“utterly”) in this passage, see Winton Thomas, “Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew,” 220; idem, “Some Further Remarks on Unusual Ways,” 122.



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